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Gangster's death and CIA's fallen prestige

From an ideological standpoint, the CIA was on solid ground when it hatched a plot with John Roselli and Sam (Momo the Mum) Giancana to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba.

After all, the two gangsters had as much reason as the CIA did to be distressed over the collapse of freedom in Cuba. Before the Communist

have been wise to select more respectable patriots to do its dirty work. Mr. Giancana, it may be recalled, was considered the kingpin of the Chicago rackets for years. One of Mr. Roselli's better known exploits was his participation in shaking down the movie industry for a big sum of money back in 1944. His business associates, in addition to Mr. Giancana and the CIA, included Charles (Cherry Nose) Gioe and Louis (Little New York) Campagna.

There was a time when the spy organization was thought to be in the forefront of those fighting to preserve all that is good and decent in American life. The bizarre alliance with organized crime and the other unsavory activities revealed by congressional investigations have severely damaged that image.

dictator took over, the Mafia, an enthusiastic advocate of free enterprise, had substantial investments in gambling and other criminal activity there.

In other respects, the agency would

One indication of the CIA's loss of public esteem was the reaction when Mr. Roselli's body was found in a barrel in Biscayne Bay, near Miami.

A lot of folks immediately suspected the CIA was responsible for Mr. Roselli's murder, just as some people thought the agency might have been involved in the shooting of Mr. Giancana last year. William E. Colby, former CIA director, had to suffer the indignity of being asked during a television interview whether the agency had had anything to do with what was described as a "gangland execution." He of course denied any connection.

The CIA's high command may very well have been delighted to see the two old hoods disappear from the scene. After all they may have been in a position to reveal more embar-

assing details about CIA assassination plots or about President Kennedy's alleged relationship with a pretty lady who was also on friendly terms with Mafia leaders.

In spite of all that has been discovered about the agency's activities, a jaded public would still be genuinely shocked if it turns out that the spooks ordered the gangland-style killings. For all its blunders, the CIA has not yet degenerated into a criminal organization. Let's hope Mr. Colby had no reason to cross his fingers behind his back when he proclaimed the agency's innocence.

But suspicions will persist, and understandably so. As grandma used to say, a man is known by the company he keeps. That applies to the CIA as well.

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